

**Harold Eston Fowler ( Sr. )**

**# 844424 Canadian Expeditionary Force.**

**“C” Battery (The Borden’s)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade.**



## **Prologue**

My Grandfather passed away on Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> just 3 days after my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1960. He was, all though life a soft spoken man who never raised his voice, the opposite of the fierce warrior that he once had to be. My father Harold Eston Fowler (Jr.) and my uncle John Hayes brought me, my brother Ian and my cousins Glenn and Diane Hayes to his hospital bed a few days before he died, as he wanted to look at us for one last time. I believe he was at peace with what he had to do in the First World War to help keep the world a free place. I do remember my Grandmother once saying he sometimes felt bad for having to kill so many men in the war, his grandmother Sarah Fowler, nee Eberle was half German and I think that bothered him to some extent.

I have always had a great interest in my grandfathers World War One experiences. He seldom ever spoke of them as did most Canadian World War One veterans, mostly due to the memories being unpleasant ones.

My only recollection was as a child of maybe 7 or 8 years old sitting in front of his black and white TV at 761 Ross Ave. in Sarnia, a World War 2 movie or newsreel came on

and I, using my finger as a gun went bang bang ... I want to kill those Germans. He calmly said to me .....no Les you don't want to ever have to do that, War and killing is a horrible thing.

Years after his death I recall my grandmother saying the two of them were once walking near their home on Ross Ave. when they saw a man slapping his wife or girlfriend. Harold told him to stop to which the man replied "What are you going to do about it old man". Harold's reply was "I fought German Soldiers face to face, I'm not afraid of you". The man turned and quickly walked away.

Many years after his death ( early 1969 ) I was working as a temporary employee at the Imperial Oil Refinery in Sarnia where Harold worked for most of his life , an elderly employee asked me my name , upon hearing my last name " Fowler" he asked me if I was related to Harold Fowler, to which I said yes, he was my grandfather. The man shook my hand and said he was a well respected man by everyone who knew him.

I have here compiled as much information as I can find of Harold's military service in the First World War, using his Service Record and the various Unit War Diaries

stored within the Government Archives in Ottawa, the document “*History of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps*” which was compiled in 1919, several books written about Canada’s role in “*The Great War*” concentrating on the “Battle of Amiens” and “The Last 100 Days of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War”, plus valuable information supplied to me by my friend Dwight Mercer of Regina Saskatchewan whose grandfather was a 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gunner in “C” Battery (The Borden’s) and would have fought alongside Harold.

**Les Fowler , Grandson**

**Feb.28<sup>th</sup> 2016**





## **Chapter 1**

### **In Canada**

Being born on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1898 and growing up in the small idyllic Ontario town of Watford in Lambton County, Harold had no idea of what his late teen years would bring to him. With the outbreak of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1914 many of Canada's youth were eager to join the fight for King and Country when the Commonwealth declared war on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1914. The legal age of 18 was required to join the Military, but as can be seen on Harold's attestation papers his year of birth was scribbled over to make him seem one year older than he actually was. At the age of 17 years 5 months, the recruiting personnel assumed he would be over 18 by the time he made it overseas so they fudged his document and gladly signed him up. His parents Jacob and Ida Fowler, although certainly worried must have been very proud of their only son of 5 children to volunteer to serve the country in these worrying times.

ORIGINAL

## ATTESTATION PAPER.

No. 844424

Folio.

## CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

## QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.

(ANSWERS.)

1. What is your surname?..... *Fowler*
- 1a. What are your Christian names?..... *Harold Eston*
- 1b. What is your present address?..... *Watford Ont.*
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born?..... *Watford Ont.*
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin?..... *Jacob Fowler*
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?..... *Watford Ont.*
- 4a. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin?..... *Father*
5. What is the date of your birth?..... *Oct 2nd 1899*
6. What is your Trade or Calling?..... *Telegraph Operator*
7. Are you married?..... *no*
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated?..... *yes*
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?..... *no*
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force?..... *none*  
If so, state particulars of former Service.
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?..... *yes*
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the }  
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? }..... *yes*

## DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *Harold Eston Fowler*, do solemnly declare that the above are answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

Date *Feb 28th* 1916. *Harold Eston Fowler* (Signature of Recruit)  
*R. P. Brown* (Signature of Witness)

## OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *H. E. Fowler*, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

Date *28th Feb* 1916. *Harold Eston Fowler* (Signature of Recruit)  
*R. P. Brown* (Signature of Witness)

## CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at *Watford* this *28th* day of *Feb* 1916.

*R. P. Brown* (Signature of Justice)

# Description of Harold Eston Howler on Enlistment.

Apparent Age 18 years ..... months.  
(To be determined according to the instructions given in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.)

Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous disease.

(Should the Medical Officer be of opinion that the recruit has served before, he will, unless the man acknowledges to any previous service, attach a slip to that effect, for the information of the Approving Officer).

Height ..... 5 ft 9 ins.

none

Chest measurement.  
(Girth when fully expanded..... 36 ins.  
Range of expansion..... 3 ins.)

Complexion Fresh

Eyes grey

Hair Light brown

Religious denominations.  
Church of England.....  
Presbyterian.....  
Methodist..... yes.  
Baptist or Congregationalist.....  
Roman Catholic.....  
Jewish.....  
Other denominations.....  
(Denomination to be stated.)

## CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

I have examined the above-named Recruit and find that he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.

He can see at the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs, and he declares that he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him\* fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

Date Feb 28th 1916

Place Wainford Ont.

W. J. Siddall M.D.  
Medical Officer.

\*Insert here "fit" or "unfit."

NOTE.—Should the Medical Officer consider the Recruit unfit, he will fill in the foregoing Certificate only in the case of those who have been attested, and will briefly state below the cause of unfitness:—

## CERTIFICATE OF OFFICER COMMANDING UNIT.

Harold Eston Howler.....having been finally approved and inspected by me this day, and his Name, Age, Date of Attestation, and every prescribed particular having been recorded, I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.

W. J. Siddall.....(Signature of Officer)

Date 28th Feby. 1916

for Major D. G. 149th C.E.F.



Recruiting poster from the Petrolia Advisor Newspaper.

**MEN! MEN! MEN!**  
**Report at Once at the Recruiting Office**  
 You are needed to uphold the dearest things in the world  
**TRUTH HONOR LIBERTY**  
 The life worth living is to be found in the ranks defending the  
 weak and oppressed  
**Enlist Now, in Lambtons 149 Batt., G. E. F.**  
 The Banner Battalion of Canada  
**SCALE OF PAY**

Rank	Pay Per Day.	Field Allowance Per Day.	Separation Allowance Per Month.
Sergeants .....	\$1.35	15c	\$25.00
Corporals .....	1.10	10	20.00
Privates, buglers, drummers, etc .....	1.00	10	20.00

Men are fed and clothed by the Government.

The Patriotic Fund has been created to assist those dependents of a soldier who need more help than the Government gives.

Many employers have pledged themselves to give preference to returned soldiers when engaging men.

**PENSIONS**—In case of death \$22.00 a month is paid to the widow, and \$5.00 a month for each child. A widowed mother whose son was her sole support receives \$22.00 a month. Pensions are also paid for partial and permanent disablement.

**CONDITIONS OF ENLISTMENT**—Age, 18 years to 45 years. Height, 5 feet 2 inches minimum.

**HOW TO ENLIST**—Apply at recruiting office, Main St. Opposite Tecumseh House, Petrolia, or any of the following recruiting stations. Watford, Sarnia, Forest, Alvinston, Brigden, Arkona, Thedford, Oil Springs.

**149th Battalion---Lambton's**  
 Lt. Col. T. P Bradley, O. C. 149th Batt.

Petrolia Advertiser  
 26 January 1916

The 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion C.E.F. began forming on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1915 with it's headquarters in Watford Ontario.



The Battalion was recruiting men from all of Lambton County. Harold signed up, on Feb. 28<sup>th</sup> 1916. A month later on May 28<sup>th</sup> 1916 a Battalion parade was held in Sarnia which included Ball Games and Bayonet Fighting.



# ***Grand Mobilization LAMBTONS 149 Sarnia, May 28th to 29th***

---

## ***Programme of Events***

### **SATURDAY**

- 9 a.m. Grande Military Parade around City.
- 2 p.m. Battalion will fall in on Market Square, march to Old Golf Links, Exmouth street, for Field Day of Military Sports.
- 3 p.m. Bayonet Fighting and Physical Training Exhibition.
- 3.30 p.m. Baseball Game; Football Game and other athletics start; at Golf Links.
- 8 p.m. Athletic Exhibition in City Hall;
  - 2 Wrestling Bouts
  - 2 Boxing Bouts
  - etc.
- Music in Attendance

### **SUNDAY**

- 9.30 a.m. Church Parade of whole battalion on Victoria Square.

### **MONDAY**

Entrain for London

GOODBYE TO LAMBTON  
GOD SAVE THE KING

Programme for the Mobilization of the 149th Battalion  
as it appeared in the May 26, 1916 issue of the Sarnia Canadian.

---

Two days later the Battalion would travel by train to Carling Heights near London Ontario to begin training.

Here they prepare to board the Grand Trunk R.R. Train at  
Ferry Dock Hill near Front St. in downtown Sarnia Ont.





Early photos (1916) have Harold holding a bugle and being associated with the Battalion's Band. We can only guess why, probably because he was underage at his time of enlistment.

Here the 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion poses at Queens Park in London Ont., (Western Fair Grounds). Harold is standing with his bugle in hand behind the band on the left in this early 1916 undated photo.



This photo is the full 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion Band including the bugling section taken 1916 at Queens Park London Ont. Harold with his bugle is in back row 4<sup>th</sup> from the right.



WW1 Bugle.



Inset from the above photo.



Here Harold along with his bugle is standing on the left with some members of the 149<sup>th</sup> Band along with some appreciative ladies.

Photo taken probably in 1916 Queens Park London Ont.

Ladies always love men in uniform.





Each Battalion had their “Colours” (Flags), the 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion Colours now rest at the Lambton Heritage Museum near Grand Bend Ont.



On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1916 they moved to Camp Borden (named after the Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden) which is near Lake Simcoe north of Toronto to begin training in earnest. The Camp was mostly bush at first so the men were required to clear it themselves to set up the Camp. It soon would become a vast tent city housing over 32,000 troops.



The 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion would pose for photos several times at Camp Borden. At this point Harold gave up his bugle and was put into the Lewis Gun section of the 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The Lewis Gun was at this time considered an Infantry weapon. This move was likely due to him being an above average shot and very mechanically inclined which were both necessary attributes as a Lewis Gunner.



Harold is the 4<sup>th</sup> man from the right in this Sept.29<sup>th</sup> 1916 Battalion photo now in the Lewis Gun section, with their 3 Lewis Machine Guns.

Another full Battalion photo at Camp Borden in 1916.





Inset from the above photo.

Harold is standing directly in front of the center Lewis Machine Gun sometime in 1916 at Camp Borden.



Below Harold is directly behind the left Officer.



The Lewis Machine Gun was almost like a large rifle with an air cooled barrel and a 50 round magazine on top, it could be fired from the hip or on the ground. The Battalions allotment of only 3 Lewis Machine Guns was standard practice for this time frame in the C.E.F.



Basic training in 1916 would consist of general military tactics, rifle shooting, route marches, and calisthenics designed for physical toughening, but the chosen Lewis Machine Gunners would be given extra tutoring beyond the basics, but mostly in a defensive posture against enemy attack.

Summer time would be very hot and humid at Camp Borden in southern Ontario, so straw hats were issued to all the men for the summer months. Harold is 2<sup>nd</sup> from the left, a fine looking crew posing outside of their tent.



In stark contrast to summer, winter 1916/1917 living in tents at Camp Borden would be a challenge to keep warm so eventually they would move back to Queens Park in London Ontario for the coldest months and then back to Camp Borden as spring approached. The use of camp fires would help to some extent, maybe even make a cup of hot tea on a cold winter night.

Harold is on the right warming his hands on a cool night while smoking his pipe.





During Christmas week at Queens Park of 1916 a Mumps outbreak occurred amongst the Battalion lasting until early March with over 50 men being quarantined. Harold was not among the men contacting the Mumps.

M. F. R. 129.  
11 10 1916-1917  
H. Q. 1773-1916.

In any future correspondence as to this subject please refer to this file number.

No. 1 D. 30-1-1

London, Ont. Feb. 10th. 1917

From The O.C., M.D., No. 1,  
London, Ont.

To Secretary, Militia Council,  
Ottawa, Ont.

**DEPT. MILITIA & DEFENCE  
FEB 12 1917  
H.Q. 613-330-4  
CANADA**

Outbreak of Mumps.  
149th. O/S. Battalion,  
London, Ont.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that a number of cases of Mumps have developed in the men of the 149th. O/S. Battalion quartered at Queens Park, London, Ont.

The first case occurred during the week ending December 23rd. 1916.

From that date to the week ending the 10th. instant, there have been 49 cases in all, reported.

As shown in the weekly returns of Infectious Diseases already forwarded, cases have occurred as follows:-

Week ending Dec. 23rd. 1916 -	1 case.
Week ending Dec. 30th. 1916 -	1 case.
Week ending Jan. 6th. 1917 -	0 cases.
Week ending Jan. 13th. 1917 -	7 cases.
Week ending Jan. 20th. 1917 -	10 cases.
Week ending Jan. 27th. 1917 -	8 cases.
Week ending Feb. 3rd. 1917 -	12 cases.
Week ending Feb. 10th. 1917 -	4 cases.

Of this total of 49 cases, 17 have been discharged up to the week ending February 10th., leaving 32 still in quarantine.

Daily inspections of the entire personnel of this Battalion, and all other Units quartered at the Queens Park Camp, are being systematically carried out. Suspects are isolated in separate cubicles, in a building set apart for this purpose, for observation, and should the disease

-2-

**DEPT. MILITIA & DEFENCE  
FEB 12 1917  
H.Q. 613-330-4  
CANADA**

develop in these cases they are transferred to the special ward for Mumps in Military Hospital.

The number of cases which have developed during the last week shows a noticeable reduction, and it is hoped that the rigid inspection being enforced will soon result in the control of the infection.

The cases have been fairly uniformly distributed amongst the different companies of the Battalion, and, at present it would be inadvisable to permit movement of this Unit.

A further report will be forwarded next week.

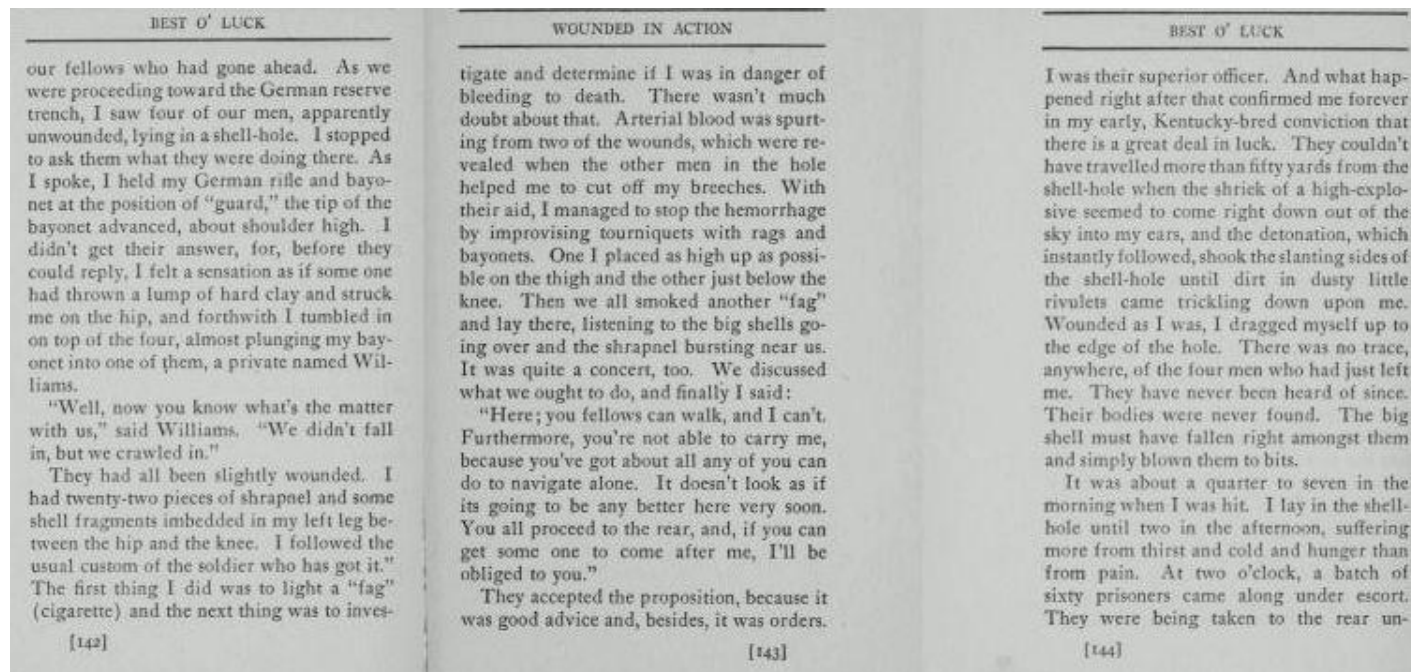
I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

*L. W. Shannon* Colonel,  
O.C., M.D., No. 1

In late November or early December of 1916 Harold would receive the sad news that his cousin Clarence James Williams was killed on Nov.18<sup>th</sup> the last day of the Battle of the Somme while attacking "*Desire Trench.*"

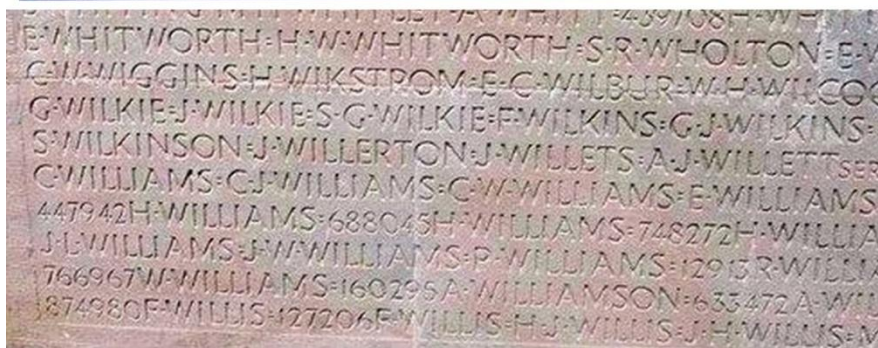
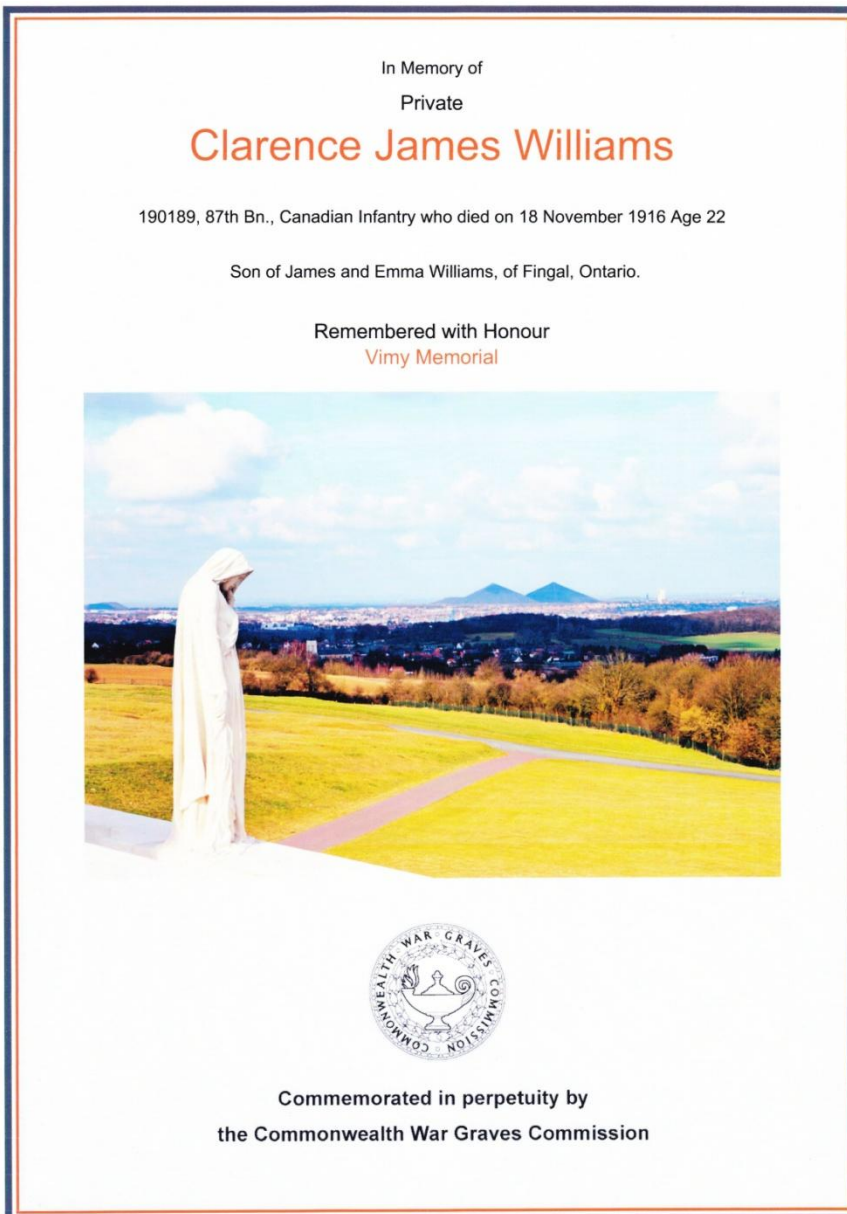
Clarence was the son of James and Emma Williams of Fingal Ont. (Emma was sister to Harold's father Jacob) Clarence attested to the 91<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Elgin County) on Apr.1<sup>st</sup> 1916 at St. Thomas Ont., but in France was transferred to the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Grenadier Guards) on Aug.20<sup>th</sup>. His death on Nov.18<sup>th</sup> 1916 was witnessed and described by Sergeant Alexander McClintock on that fateful day in his book titled .....

### *"Best O' Luck".*





# Clarence's name is inscribed on the Vimy Memorial





Portrait of Clarence James Williams #190189.

Photo courtesy of the Elgin Military Museum.



The distressing news of his cousin's death while training throughout the cold winter would not make for a very joyous Christmas this year, but it probably inspired Harold to become the best possible soldier he could be.

149<sup>th</sup> Battalion Christmas Card.





# 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion 1917 Calendar.



With training completed in March of 1917 they moved temporarily back to Queen's Park in London Ont. The men had to sleep under the grandstand while there, but they were tough men now, no longer boys. Harold was given a pass to visit family at home in Watford from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1917 as the Battalion was scheduled to go by train to Halifax to board the S.S. Lapland for the voyage to England on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March.

(To be handed to the Man proceeding on Pass.)

**PASS.**

Place London  
Date MAR 16 1917

Royal B' COMPANY, 149th BN, C.E.F.  
No. 844424 Gte Fowler

has permission to be absent from his Quarters from 5  
o'clock pm the MAR 16 1917 until 12  
o'clock noon the MAR 19 1917 for the  
purpose of going Watford

W.S. MAR 16 1917 149th Bn. C.E.F.  
Lt.-Col. Commanding.

W. J. Macvicar

Mil. Book 63.  
25m.—10-16.  
H. Q. 1772-61-32.

This photo was probably taken at Harold's father Jacob Eston Fowler's home in Watford Ont. Left to right is Joe Alldred #844027 with Annie Ferns, Harold with her sister Rosetta Ferns. After the war the two Petrolia sisters would marry their lucky respective soldiers.





Here again at Jacob Fowler's in Watford seated left to right is Harold, Rosetta Ferns, and Joe Alldred. Annie Ferns is standing behind Joe, the other 3 are unknown.



This welcome 4 day pass would be the last time the men would see their family and friends for the next 2 years. The incoming war news from Europe listing the many Canadian casualties of many dead and many with permanent injuries would be worrisome for Rosetta and Harold's families considering the thought of Harold's cousin Clarence Williams who was blown to bits.

Harold and Joe Alldred with unknown lady in Watford.



Joe Alldred would, in England be transferred from the 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles which as an Infantry Unit were at times asked to perform Cavalry manoeuvres which were usually not practical against the vast trench systems protected by row upon row of barbed wire and machine guns.



Harold would send \$20 per month home to his mother.

Army Book 84.

Reg. No. 844424

Name FOWLER H.E.

CANADIAN PAY BOOK

FOR USE ON

ACTIVE SERVICE.

1

Particulars of Family, etc:

1. State whether married, widower or single:  
Single

2. If married, give full name and postal address of wife, or if widower, name and address of guardian of children, or if single, name and address of next-of-kin, stating relationship to the soldier: Father.  
Mr. Jacob Fowler,  
Wattford  
Ontario

3. If married after enlistment, state date of marriage:

4. Assignment of pay: Twenty. \$ Date effective: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name and address of assignee: Mother.  
Mrs. Ida Fowler,  
Same address as No. 2.

6. Any change of assignee:

2

Original unit in which enlisted:  
149th Battalion

Regimental Depot: SEAFORD.

Reserve unit:

Unit in field:  
1st CANADIAN MOTOR MACHINE GUN BRIGADE.

Regimental Number: 844424

Rank (1) Pte. Rank (5) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_ (6) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_ (7) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_ (8) \_\_\_\_\_

Name in full (surname first):  
FOWLER Harold, Eston,

Civilian occupation:  
Telegraph Operator

Attestation date:  
28th. February 1916.

Religion: Methodist



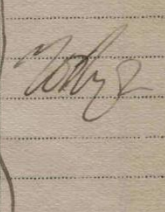
They were paid \$1:00 per day plus 10 cents overseas.

Regt. No. 844424 <sup>H.E.</sup>  
 Name PL. FOWLER  
In block letters (Surname first)

**PAY BOOK**

**CANADIAN  
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE**

M.P. 12, 2843,  
1921, 10-18,  
1272-1179.

Signature of Soldier <u>H. E. Fowler</u>		Regt. No. <u>844424</u>	Name <u>PL. FOWLER H.E.</u> <small>In block letters (surname first)</small>					
Date	Particulars	Credits	Cash Payments and other charges	Assigned Pay	Deferred Pay	BALANCE Debit    Credit		Signature of Paymaster or officer making award
	Book opened this date <u>1-4-19.</u>		<u>13 30</u>					
	<u>27-4-19</u> Pay & Allowance to	<u>29 70</u>						
	Civilian Clothing Allowance	<u>35 00</u>						
	1st. Payment W. S. G.	<u>70 00</u>						
	Assigned Pay <u>Apr</u>			<u>20 00</u>				
	Boat Expense Money							
	Train Expense Money		<u>4 87</u>					
	Cheque No. <u>53209</u>		<u>5 00</u>					
			<u>91 53</u>					
Totals Carried Forward								

## Chapter 2

### In England

From Halifax on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1917 the S.S. Lapland would take them across the Atlantic Ocean to England.

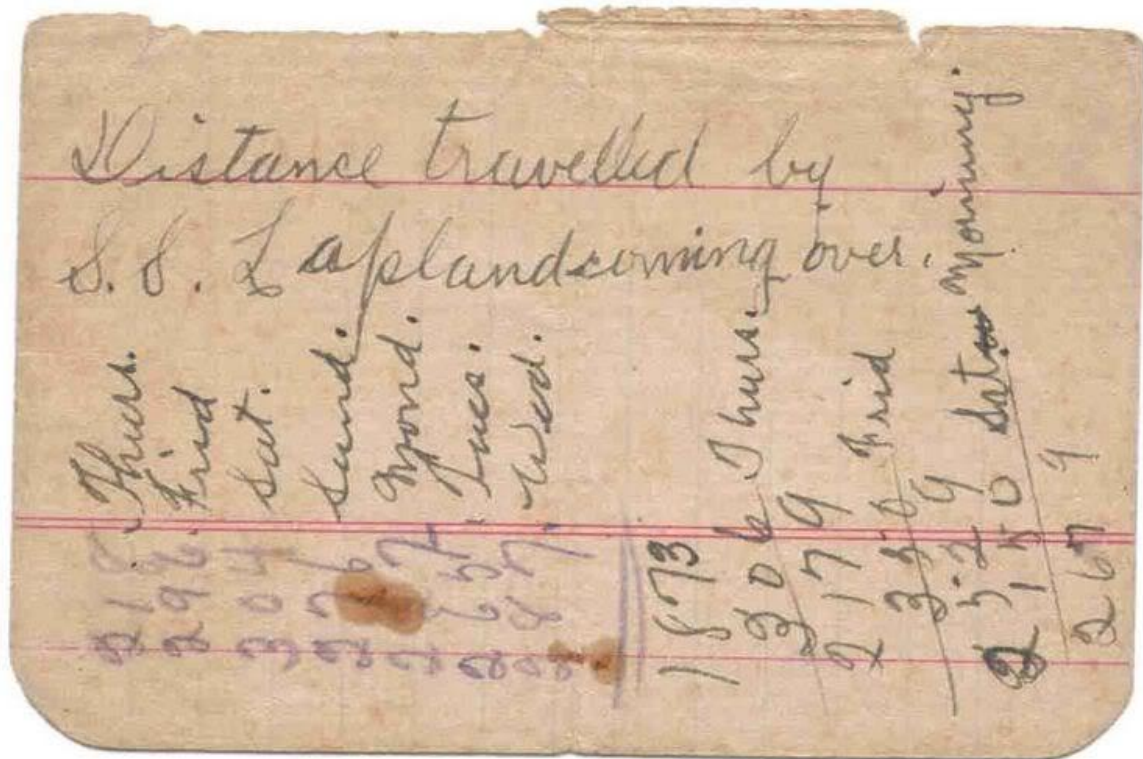
Red Star Line  
New  
Twin-Screw  
Steamer  
“Lapland”



18,694 tons  
620 feet long  
70 feet beam



On the voyage across the Atlantic Harold kept track of the distance traveled each day on a small piece of paper.



They would arrive on April 7<sup>th</sup> 1917, two days before the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The boredom of an uneventful crossing of the Atlantic would change abruptly upon entering the Mersey River. About 12 miles from Liverpool the S.S. Lapland struck a mine but fortunately made it to the dock before sinking. Luckily no casualties were reported.

The 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion was then quickly disbanded as men were desperately needed as replacements to the fighting Battalions in France. Many 149<sup>th</sup> men would be immediately sent to France, mainly to the 18<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalions. Luckily Harold was transferred to the 25<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion at Camp Bramshott, then on June 1<sup>st</sup> he and about 200 others were sent to the 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion C.E.F. who were training at Witley Camp in Surrey. At Witley Camp they were housed in wooden huts, which would be a welcome change from their previous tent living at Camp Borden.





Aerial view of Camp Witley, Surrey England.



Cap Badge for the 161st Battalion.



Although it's unlikely Harold would know any men of the 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion at first, they were all from close by in Huron County the Godrich area (north of Sarnia) so they would have lots in common. Charles Francis Bell #844067 of Sarnia was continually transferred to the same Units as Harold throughout the War. They would both fight together in "C" Battery of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade. It must have been helpful for both of them to have another Lambton County man at your side throughout the war.

The 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion C.E.F. was now part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division. The Canadian Corps was comprised of 4 Divisions fighting in France while the just newly formed 5<sup>th</sup> Division was kept training in England. They were kept there for the time being as a large defensive Unit capable of defending England in case of a German invasion.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division had an intricate system of trenches dug into the English countryside that simulated the Western Front trench system. All through 1917 the 161<sup>st</sup> practiced trench raids with the other Battalions of the 14<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Division, the 125<sup>th</sup>,

150<sup>th</sup>, 156<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Company. (Unknown at the time the 18<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Company would in June of 1918 become “E” Battery of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade who would fight side by side with “C” Battery (the Borden Battery).

This training would consist of these Battalions taking turns as the attacking Canadians or the attacking enemy. The war diaries for the 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion list them as being called at times the *“German 99<sup>th</sup> Bavarian Regiment”* when they were to play the defending or attacking enemy troops. During a short break on July 27<sup>th</sup> His Majesty King George the V and Her Majesty Queen Mary arrived to inspect the troops. The King expressed his satisfaction at the keenness and appearance of the troops of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division. The rest of the year would be more of the same intense training, practising trench warfare against each other, machine gunning, Mills Bomb throwing (hand grenades) and Bayoneting.





Bayonet training Camp Witley.

Harold is in 2<sup>nd</sup> row 2<sup>nd</sup> from the right.



Harold at this time would become trained in the use of the British Vickers Machine Gun. It would become his *"Tool of the Trade"* for the fighting ahead. The men on a Vickers Machine Gun Crew would be required not just to be able to operate it, but be able to un-jam or replace broken parts of the gun under fire and in the dark, as their lives would certainly depend on it.

Harold was trained as the # 2 man on his machine gun crew. His main job was to feed the 250 round belts into the gun so the # 1 man only needed to concentrate on shooting. If the # 1 man was killed, wounded or fatigued he would take over as the # 1 man. The # 3, 4, and 5 men would supply fresh ammo belts and do scouting duties.



The Vickers Machine Gun could fire at a rate of over 500 rounds per minute so a 250 round belt could be emptied

in 30 seconds , the belt was 27 feet long , hence the expression still used today *“give em’ the whole 9 yards”* .

The can in front is to supply water to the barrel cooling jacket to cool the barrel which would get very hot and melt or explode without it. Barrels would wear out soon enough and need to be changed after a set number of rounds (15,000) or they would become inaccurate. In winter the Canadian gunners would run a long hose away from the gun so the enemy seeing the steam from the hot water would think they were in a different location, fire on the steam and disclose their own location to deadly results.

They would also be trained on using captured German machine guns so they could turn them around in battle and use them against the fleeing German Troops that left them behind. The 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion Machine Gun Section would be a highly efficient well trained and close knit Unit by the early months of 1918.



Although they trained hard most days, they would get some occasional time off for a bit of fun. Here with a smoke, a wooden gun, a gas mask, and a few beers.

Photo taken at Camp Witley in 1917.

Harold is on the right in front with a fresh hair cut.

This is likely part of the 161<sup>st</sup> Machine Gun Section.



The 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion competed in several Sports Days while at Witley Camp. One of Harold's souvenirs is this small Boxing Medal that he may have won there, or in 1918 during a Sports Day with the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.M.G.B.



In England with the 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

Shoulder Patch signifies the 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Division.





In England with the 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

Easily seen here are the famous Fowler ears still being passed on to this day.



## **Chapter 3**

### **France , Belgium , Germany.**

Early in 1918 the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division was ordered to disband and the men used as replacements in France which were badly needed due to the high casualty rate. So now Harold and most of the 161<sup>st</sup> machine gunners were sent to the 4<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion on Feb.23<sup>rd</sup>, then on March 16<sup>th</sup> orders came to go to France to join the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He arrived on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1918 at "*Columbia Camp*" near Souchez in the Vimy area of France. The 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion was originally from New Westminster B.C. but re-designated as a Southern Ontario Battalion in early 1918 due to the fact replacements coming in from B.C. could not keep pace with the casualty rate. As the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion had taken on many 149<sup>th</sup> men much earlier Harold would briefly meet up with some old friends, at least those who were still alive. One can only imagine how he felt after enlisting under age at 17 and spending 2 years of training before being sent to the actual war.



His short stay with the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion was uneventful, lasting just a few weeks while the Battalion was out of the line. New orders came through for him and a few others to be sent to the Canadian Machine Gun Corps Reinforcement Pool. From there, on June 7<sup>th</sup> he was posted to “C” Battery ( Borden Battery ) of the newly reorganized 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade and would stay in this Unit for the duration of the war.



This page from the Borden Battery War Diaries show it becoming "C" Battery of the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.M.G.B. with the addition of 16 other ranks (Privates). Signed by Capt. W.T. Trench Commanding Officer Borden M.M.G.Battery.

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.			Army Form C. 2118.
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs. Part II. and the Staff Manual respectively. This page will be prepared in manuscript.			(Brass heading not required.)
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
Borden	June 8	1916	<p>By Authority of Can Corps. a/105/1050 d/12.6.18 and J. H. &amp; Q. B. 1914 d/31.5.18</p> <p>The Borden Motor Machine Gun Battery ceased to be an administrative unit, and becomes absorbed into the recently approved establishment of the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade with effect from June 8, 1916.</p> <p>The personnel of the Battery will remain unchanged except for the addition of 16 Q. B. and will become "C" Battery 1st C. M. M. G. Bde.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">W. T. Trench CAPT. COMMANDING BORDEN M.M.G. BATTY.</p>

955 Wt. W554/454 700000 g/5 D.D. & L. A.D.S.S./Form C. 2118.

The "Borden's" as they always called themselves were already a battle hardened Unit from previous fighting and would continue to distinguish itself until the Armistice. Other countries would form Armoured Mobile Units in the war but the Canadian Motor Machine Gunners were the first active Armoured Mobile Machine Gun Unit in warfare history.

Cap and Collar Badge for the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.M.G.B. has a Canadian Beaver sitting atop the Wheel of their Armoured Car and the American Colt Machine Gun which they used until Aug.1916 but then switched to the Vickers Machine Gun from that point onward.

Harold wore these Collar Badges.



The standard Machine Gun Corps Cap Badge Harold wore along with the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” collar badges.



The “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” tunics, helmets and vehicles sported a brown arrow over a red bar to signify who they were.





Every Soldier was required to wear an Identification Disc or “Dog Tag” to identify them if they became a casualty.

The front reads – 844424 P H FOWLER CAN

The back reads – 1 ST MMGB



In the early years of the war machine guns were only considered to be defensive weapons with only a couple per battalion, but the Canadians would lead the British in changing their usefulness as offensive weapons. The British War Records would often favour themselves as the leaders in “Machine Gunnery”, but it was Canadian General Raymond Brutinel who was the brilliant mind behind future tactics of machine gun use. He devised the use of the machine gun as a weapon similar to the

artillery cannon, keeping the enemy huddled down in their trenches and dugouts so the Canadian Infantry could advance on them across "*No Man's Land*" without being mowed down. This tactic was first used to great success during the Canadian assault on Vimy Ridge.

General Brutinel would also set up a Canadian Machine Gun Corps School in France to further advance machine gun skills and tactics, his machine gunners would be in high demand in the upcoming months.

The men chosen to be transferred to the two Motor Machine Gun Brigades were not randomly picked out of the many men available. General Brutinel ordered his staff to find the best men they possibly could, intelligent, well trained and highly disciplined. Capt. Mark Levey who was in charge of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps School only took the "*cream of the crop*". General Brutinel expected his men to be the best men available and Capt. Levey did not let him down in his choices.

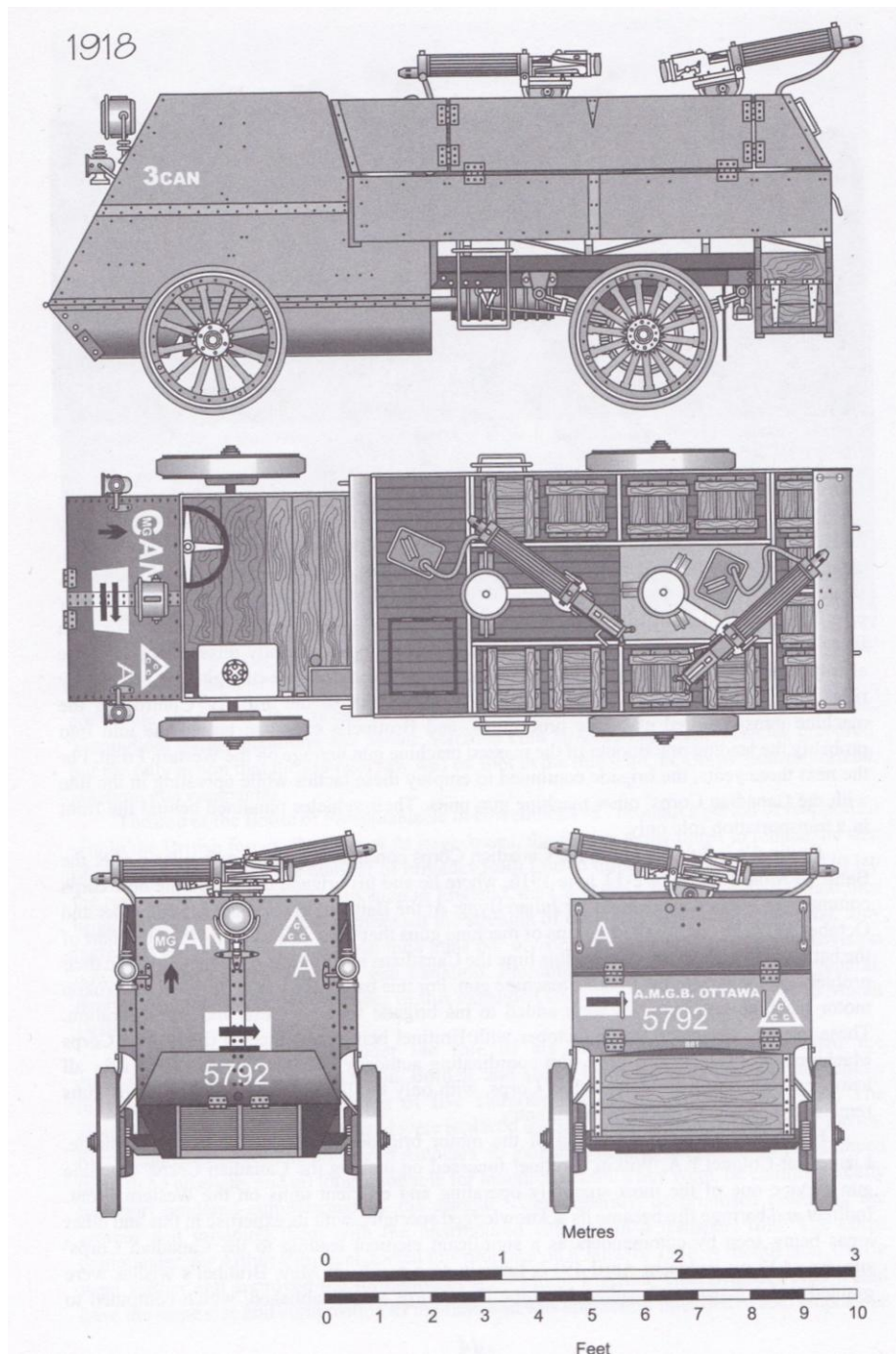
They wanted men who would not just blindly follow orders under fire, but be capable of independent thought and brave action to achieve positive results under the worst possible conditions.

The Brigade totalling 40 Machine Guns, was comprised of 5 Batteries, plus water, fuel, and ammunition carriers, and a few Ford cars for the officers. Each Battery with 8 machine guns was comprised of about 55 men. The Brigade would only total about 26 Officers and 406 other ranks, small when compared to an Infantry Battalion that totalled about 1000 men. Although being relatively small in size the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.M.G.B. would be a major factor in the intense and bitter fighting that lay ahead in the last 100 days of the war.

The “*1st Motors*” started out with light trucks obtained from the Autocar Company of Ardmore Pennsylvania and adding British Napier Lorrie Trucks in June 1918. “C” or “*Borden Battery*” would give up the Autocars at this time and use the British Napier Lorries with their tops removed and mounts for two Vickers Machine Guns in each. Very little protection was provided for the men in this manner as they would be exposed to enemy artillery shrapnel shells and machine gun fire.



## Canadian Armoured Autocar.



The war over the last 4 years was a stalemate of trench warfare with the battle lines moving very little with

millions dead on both sides, but now the Allied Forces saw a chance to break through the German Defences thus changing the war to be fought over open ground.

So for the next few weeks the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” training would change, now concentrating more upon mobile warfare tactics for the Planned “*Battle of Amiens*” which was slated to commence on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1918. Every man was fully trained to do every position within their gun crew. The “*Borden Battery*” having been in action since 1915 was now a mixture of seasoned battle hardened men such as Pvt. Richard Mercer #911016 from Theodore Saskatchewan and eager new members like Harold Fowler, Charles Bell and several other 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion machine gunners. This mixture would serve to help the new men in the many trying times ahead.

Orders came in on the evening of August 5<sup>th</sup> to move into position under the cover of darkness. They had no actual idea of where they were going but ended up hidden in a woods called Gentelles Wood. All vehicles were camouflaged, even their tire tracks were obliterated, no fires or cooking was allowed. The whereabouts of the whole Canadian Corps was kept

secret as the Germans feared the Canadians the most and would suspect an attack, and double up on the number of troops facing them.

As the attack was to be a surprise the Allied High Command even gave out false radio reports of the Canadians being moved to the Vimy sector of the Western Front. The 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles (*containing Harold's future brother-in-law Joe Alldred*) were one of the Battalions used as a ruse to fool German Intelligence as to the whereabouts of the Canadian Corps. They along with the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion and some Medical and Signal Units were sent by train to Flanders in Belgium where they made their presents known. Although befuddled by not knowing why at first, these Units would eventually just make it back in time from Flanders to join the battle.

From this point forward the two Motor Machine Gun Brigades along with a Trench Mortar Battalion, a Cyclist Battalion and some others would be known as the "*Canadian Independent Force*" or "*Brutinel's Brigade*". The composition of this force would change several times but the "*Motors*" would remain the driving force of



*“Brutinel’s Brigade”*. This composite force was unique and never duplicated in the war by any other Army, but it should be noted their accomplishments were of great value and praised by many French and British Generals.

So August 8<sup>th</sup> 1918 would be the first real combat Harold would experience. This date, the beginning of the “Battle of Amiens” marked the start of “The Last 100 Days” of the war. The Canadian Corps played a most important part in the “Last 100 Days”. The Canadian Troops were considered to be an “Elite Corps” of Shock Troops due to their reputation of bravery and fierceness from the first gas attacks in 1915, to the Battles of the Somme, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, and the German Offensive in the spring of 1918 in which the *“Borden’s”* as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.M.G.B. helped save the British 5<sup>th</sup> Army from defeat as the enemy came within 50 miles of Paris.

The Canadians were to be used as the spearhead of the Allied attacks throughout the “Last 100 Days”. The Canadians were even known as *“Foch’s Pets”* due to the fact the Allied Commanding Officer General Ferdinand Foch of France considered them the best fighters at his disposal, and there was no doubt about that by anyone.

The “*Motor Machine Gunners*” were touted as being the “*Elite of the Elite*”. Infantry soldiers would often cheer them as they drove by knowing that they would be well protected during the coming day or nights fight.

Detailed diaries of the actions of the Brigade in the ensuing days were sparsely recorded by the Brigades Headquarters Staff as they had little or no time to record them in detail as they were always a fast, constantly moving mobile unit which saw more than their share of battle action in both defensive and offensive rolls.

The roll of the 1<sup>st</sup> Motor Machine Gunners this day was, as part of the “*Canadian Independent Force*” to move forward along the Amiens-Roye Road between the French Army and the Canadian Corps to protect the Canadian flank.

The French upon reaching the outskirts of the village of Mezieres halted due to stiff German resistance in the town. This was not a desirable situation as a large gap between the stalled French Army and the rapidly advancing Canadians would develop causing a dangerous break in the Allied Line. General Brutinel along with the French High Command realizing this danger started to

plan a separate attack on Mezieres to rectify this problem when word came in that Captain W.T. Trench, who was in command of "C" Battery and a Cyclist Battalion realized the danger and sped his "C" Battery down a narrow road behind the village while under heavy enemy shelling and machine gun fire (supported by covering fire from the Cyclists) to take the enemy from the rear. This bold action allowed the French attack to resume as planned. Later in the afternoon "C" Battery joined up with the rest of the Brigade to fire on the enemy around Le Quesnel and Fresnoy to assist the French in their attack on Fresnoy which the French failed to take this day. Quite a first day under fire for any man, but many more such days lay ahead for Harold and the Borden Battery. The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade would suffer 18 men wounded this day.

Captain Trench would be awarded the "*Military Cross*" medal for his Battery's actions on Aug. 8<sup>th</sup>. Although he certainly deserved it, often times only the officer would be awarded bravery medals for the actions of his men.

The following is taken from the War Diaries of the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.M.G.B.-----



### *“Captain Waldo Talbot Trench”*

*For most conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, and skill whilst commanding a Motor Machine Gun Battery in action on August 8<sup>th</sup>, during the advance to the north of the Mezieres and Fresnoy districts. His Battery fought most keenly to keep in touch with the French on the right and throughout the whole action Captain Trench showed great courage, determination, and ability to command. When in difficult circumstances, Captain Trench’s coolness and gallantry inspired all in his Battery and in the detachment of the Cyclist Battalion attached to him. On several occasions he made bold reconnaissance which materially assisted in the success of the operation.*

The Canadians would advance 8 miles (13 Kilometres) on August 8<sup>th</sup>, the most ground taken in one day by any Army during the entire war. The German Commander Erich Ludendorf would call August 8<sup>th</sup> 1918 as “*The Black Day of the German Army*” and it would spell the beginning of the end for them.

That night “C” Battery took up a defensive position on the right side of the Amiens-Roye Road south of

Beaucourt to cover Fresnoy which was still strongly held by the enemy.

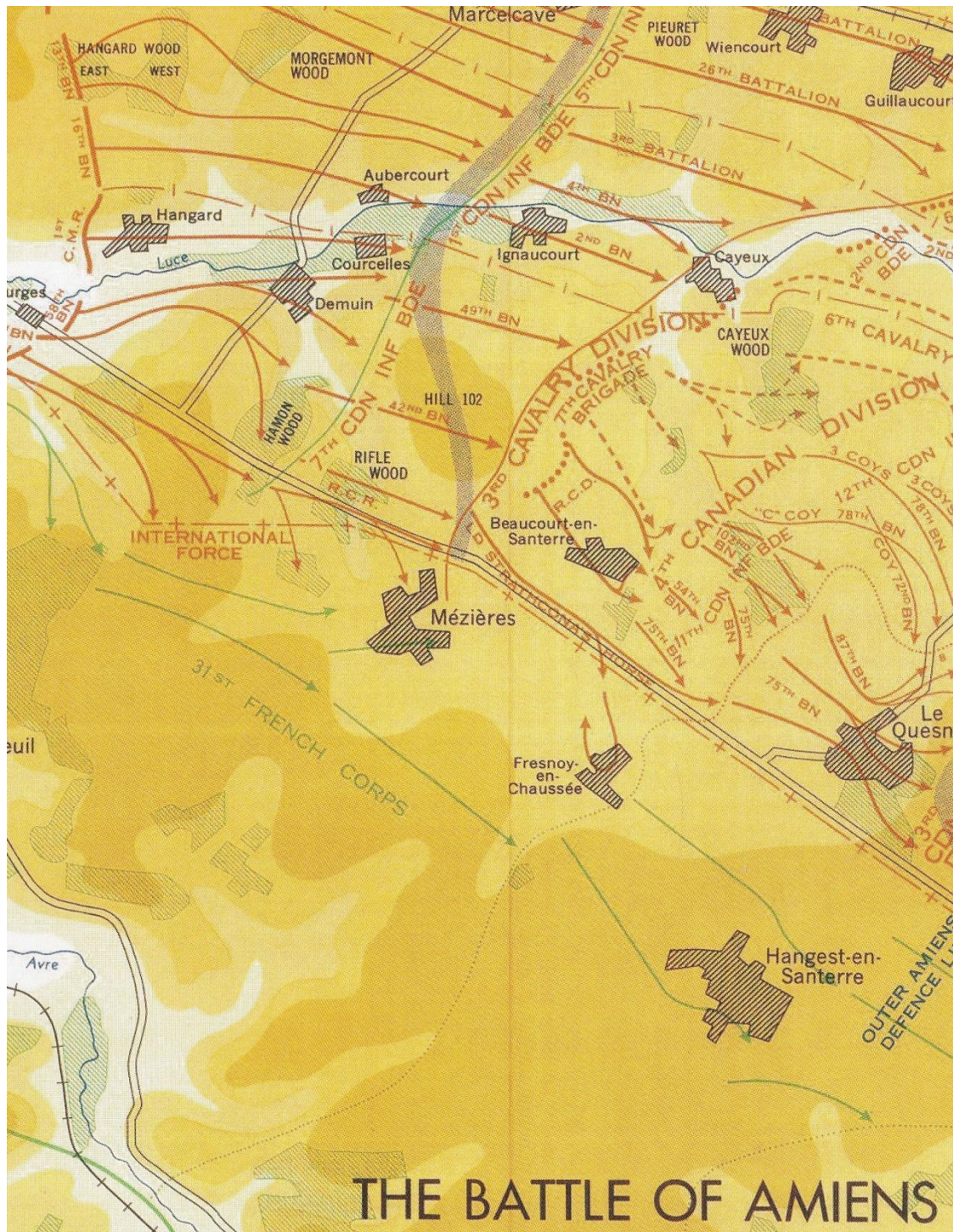
Aug.9<sup>th</sup> the Brigade assisted the 75<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mississauga) in their successful attack on Le Quesnel, but it cost them 2 men killed and 16 wounded. Later in the day they were withdrawn to the Chalk Pit south east of Beaucourt but had to move to Masion Blanche for the night due to the enemy randomly shelling the area.

Aug.10<sup>th</sup> at 4:30AM the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division would attack Le Quesnoy, so at midnight the Brigade was used to ferry the leading Battalions in their Lorries up to their jumping off position and then support them with their machine gun fire when the battle commenced. The Battle of Amiens would grind to a halt on Aug.11<sup>th</sup> as the supporting units of Artillery and supplies could not keep pace with the exhausted Infantry.

At times during a battle, the Brigade having met their objective would be sent back several miles in reserve (to rest and regroup) but at all times they were always on high alert to speed forward at a moment's notice to support any need day or night.



This map shows the Amiens – Roye Road running just north of Mezieres where the “*Canadian Independent Force*” began it’s fight on Aug.8<sup>th</sup>.





Here the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” and Trench Mortar group rest along the Amiens-Roye Road during a lull in the battle. They were ordered to put white panels on the hoods of their vehicles to prevent being subjected to friendly fire from allied airplanes. Some men can be seen wearing their Gas Mask Packs on their chests. Poison Gas was always a deadly threat throughout the First World War.



On Aug.15<sup>th</sup> General Brutinel received a letter from the Canadian Commander General Arthur Currie which read..



*“I have just finished reading with most intense interest your report on operations conducted by the Independent Force, from the 8<sup>th</sup> August to the 10<sup>th</sup> inclusive. In addition to the Special Order which I am publishing, I consider that special praise is due to the Officers and Men of your command. I congratulate you most heartily on the success achieved.”*

A lot of the “Mortars” duty was to protect the advancing Infantry Battalions by taking part in massed machine gun barrages where as much as 320,000 rounds of .303 ammunition would be fired. They were skilled not just at “Direct Fire” but also at “Indirect Fire”. This action would be, not actually seeing their targets, but with the use of maps they would fire at predetermined angles knowing at what distance their bullets would rain down upon the enemy thus protecting the Canadian Infantry Battalions as they advanced at a set rate over “No Man’s Land”.

August 26<sup>th</sup> at 3AM the Brigade fired in a successful combined artillery and machine gun barrage near Tilloy to support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division’s attack towards the Drocourt-Queant Line which was part of the well fortified Hindenberg Line of German defences using 201,000

rounds of ammunition with a machine gun placed every 35 yards of frontage. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division achieved their objective by 11AM allowing the Brigade to be sent back to Corps Reserve in Arras for a few days of rest with surprisingly only 3 men wounded.

The next planned battle was to break through the Drocourt-Queant Line and capture the high ground overlooking the Canal-du-Nord. This battle commenced at 5AM on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1918. The fighting this day was very intense, enemy artillery was heavy, plus enemy planes continually strafed them with machine gun fire and dropping small "Egg Bombs". On this day the 1<sup>st</sup> Motors would suffer 5 men killed, and 34 men wounded along with 20 of their vehicles damaged, some totally destroyed. By evening the Germans had withdrawn to the east side of the Canal-du-Nord, blowing all the bridges behind them. The Brigade would spend most of the next couple of weeks licking their wounds and getting their damaged vehicles repaired by the *"Canadian Motor Machine Gun Mechanical Transport Company"* whose job was to keep the two Motor Brigades vehicles repaired and battle ready.

General Brutinel would arrive to inspect his machine gunners on Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>. Inspections of this sort were an indicator that another major operation was being planned.

Here the Motor Machine Gunners in their vehicles move past the resting Infantry just east of Arras in Sept. 1918.



After every battle the men would religiously strip down their machine guns, thoroughly clean them and replace any worn or damaged parts. It would probably be a tedious daily routine but one of deadly importance.



Training for the next few days would combine tactics for the next planned battle as well as sports to keep moral high. Indoor baseball and football games were played, inter-battery machine gun drills, revolver competitions and small box respirator drills were also keenly contested.



As the Motor Machine Gunners usually worked in tight spaces, rifles for personal protection were not practical so they were all armed with .455 calibre pistols. In the Infantry Battalions only officers were allowed pistols, the average Canadian and British Infantry Private would be jealous of the Motor Machine Gun Privates in this regard.



They weren't always machine gunning at a distance from the enemy, sometimes they would have to rely on their pistols when in close contact with the enemy. The British Army used the Webley .455, but most of the Canadians used the American made Colt .455 as seen above.

On Sept.27<sup>th</sup> at 5:20AM just north of Inchy the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” fired in a barrage that totalled over 320,000 rounds to support the attack and crossing of the Canal du Nord. The Canal du Nord was a major obstacle that General Sir Arthur Currie the Canadian Commander said his men could take in a bold but dangerous and risky attack. They would attack on a small portion of the unfinished Canal that was dry at this time. The Canadian attack was a success, but it would cost the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” heavily as they would suffer 8 killed and 14 wounded this day. One of the men killed was Arthur Leopold Tiernay #654682, an original 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion machine gunner from Blyth Ont. Harold and Arthur would have certainly been very good friends as they trained together in the 161<sup>st</sup> Battalion Machine Gun Section all through the second half of 1917 and early part of 1918 in England.

The “Motors” were certainly the most mobile Unit on the whole Western Front, and as stated earlier they were often tasked with moving many miles on short notice. If an Infantry Battalion was in trouble they were sped to that section of the Western Front to assist with their enfilading machine gun fire.

The only problem in mobility they would have to deal with would be the artillery cratered roads with destroyed buildings and fallen trees which would impede their movement. This is where the motorcycle scouts would be of great value in finding the best possible route. Another aspect of Harold's duties were occasionally taking a turn as a motorcycle scout riding ahead of the Brigade's Armoured Cars to observe and report back the road conditions and to spot enemy placements, an extremely dangerous but necessary duty when the Brigade was ordered to quickly advance over unknown territory. They would be open to enemy fire from artillery and machine guns with only their .455 pistols to protect themselves, true men of steel.

Typical British Clyno Motorcycle.



Here the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” take a welcome rest break along the Arras-Cambrai Road just east of Arras in late Sept. 1918.



On Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> “C” Battery was dug in and well camouflaged south of Sancourt between the Cambrai-Douai Road and the railway to protect the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, it was Harold’s 20<sup>th</sup> birthday spent crouched in a hole in the ground, no birthday cake for Harold this year. For several days they would be subjected to heavy enemy artillery fire of high explosive and poison gas shells. Luck seemed to be on Harold’s side again and again, never being wounded in this “*Hell on Earth*”.



## Gas Mask worn by the Canadian Troops.



Next would be an attack to capture the bridgeheads over the Canal de l' Escaut and capture the city of Cambrai. The night of Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> "C" Battery set up their guns just south of Sancourt and at 1:30AM fired a barrage for 2 continuous hours. By mid afternoon the "*1<sup>st</sup> Motors*" would quickly cross the Canal de l' Escaut at Point d' Airy. During the night Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> intense enemy shell fire destroyed two of the "*1<sup>st</sup> Motors*" Lorries and damaged two more as well as one of their Ford cars. Casualties

from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> were 14 men killed, 13 wounded and 1 man missing, hard times for the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors.”

Oct.12<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> were spent resting at Baralle while refitting and repairing equipment. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales would visit to inspect them on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

On Oct. 19<sup>th</sup> “C” Battery and one Armoured Car were attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion at Ferin. That night “C” Battery set up their guns on the southern outskirts of Warlaing to protect them and allow them to have a needed good nights sleep. During this night the men of “C” Battery had to fill in and bridge 8 mine craters in the road so their Lorries could move forward the next day which they did with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion.

Oct.21<sup>st</sup> saw “C” Battery and “E” Battery working together as one Unit (under the command of Captain F.F. Worthington the “E” Battery commander) to assist the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade. With “E” Battery being ordered to fill in a large gap between the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion they were exhausted by evening so they were relieved by “C” Battery who set up for the night to provide covering fire for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Battalions. Throughout the night enemy artillery and

machine gun fire remained heavy killing one man and wounding another as well as putting one of the Motors guns out of action.

The next morning the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Oct. at 8AM "C" and "E" Batteries were ordered to go ahead of the Infantry to find the enemy. The two Batteries entered the town of Raismes but were hampered by destroyed roads. The neighbourhood civilians said the Germans were occupying a Chateau just north of Waraicaux, but upon going there no enemy was found. The group continued on to a bridge over the canal east of Denain-Anzin which was a mining and industrial suburb of Valenciennes. Enemy contact was made with "E" Battery taking the lead and "C" Battery in close covering support. Bitter fighting commenced against numerous German machine gun crews and after a long battle the Infantry finally came forward at 3PM as far as "C" and "E" Batteries positions to setup posts in the same neighbourhood. Later that evening "A" and "B" Motor Batteries came up to relieve "C" and "E" Batteries. At this time Capt. Worthington withdrew the two exhausted Batteries to Arenburg for the night.

*(F.F. Worthington would after the war become the Commanding Officer of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps rising to the rank of Major-General. He would be involved in choosing the Sherman Tank for Canada in World War Two, but due to his age was not allowed to join the Canadian Armoured Corps when it left England for France in W.W.2. In 1947 he was appointed as the first Civil Defence Co-ordinator of Canada.)*

The next day the 23<sup>rd</sup> the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” were held in reserve in Denain-Anzin and rested until the 28<sup>th</sup> enjoying some sports and concerts as well as overhauling their equipment.

On Oct.24<sup>th</sup> Major-General David Watson the Commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division would send a letter to the Canadian Corps Headquarters praising the great assistance given by the men of “*Brutinel’s Brigade*” in the 4<sup>th</sup> Division’s advance from Douai through Denain all the way to the Canal de l’Escaut.

Another massive combined artillery and machine gun barrage (72 machine guns) would take place on November 1<sup>st</sup> to protect the 10<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade’s advance on Valenciennes France. As



Valenciennes was crowded with French townsfolk and many more French displaced refugees the plan was to not fire directly into the city, but to lay the barrage down upon Mont Houy south of the city which was heavily fortified by the Germans.

Leading this attack would be the 44<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Battalions. So on this day Harold would actually be protecting some of the original 149<sup>th</sup> Battalion men now fighting as members of the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion. It must have been very gratifying for him and Charles Bell to know they would be protecting the lives of some Lambton County men in this crucial and major battle on this particular day.

As the Infantry was to commence the attack at 5:15AM the Batteries had to carefully set up their guns in the dark being sure of the elevation and direction of their fire. Mont Houy gave the enemy, a commanding view and fire point in all directions. The combined Canadian artillery and machine gun barrage starting at the summit of Mont Houy and finishing at the southern edge of Valenciennes would deal with the bulk of the enemies defences. Great precision was needed to gradually advance the fire at specific intervals to protect the troops

as they advanced at a set rate close behind the rain of artillery shells and machine gun bullets, but the Canadian Artillery and Machine Gunners were experts at “*Barrage Fire*”.

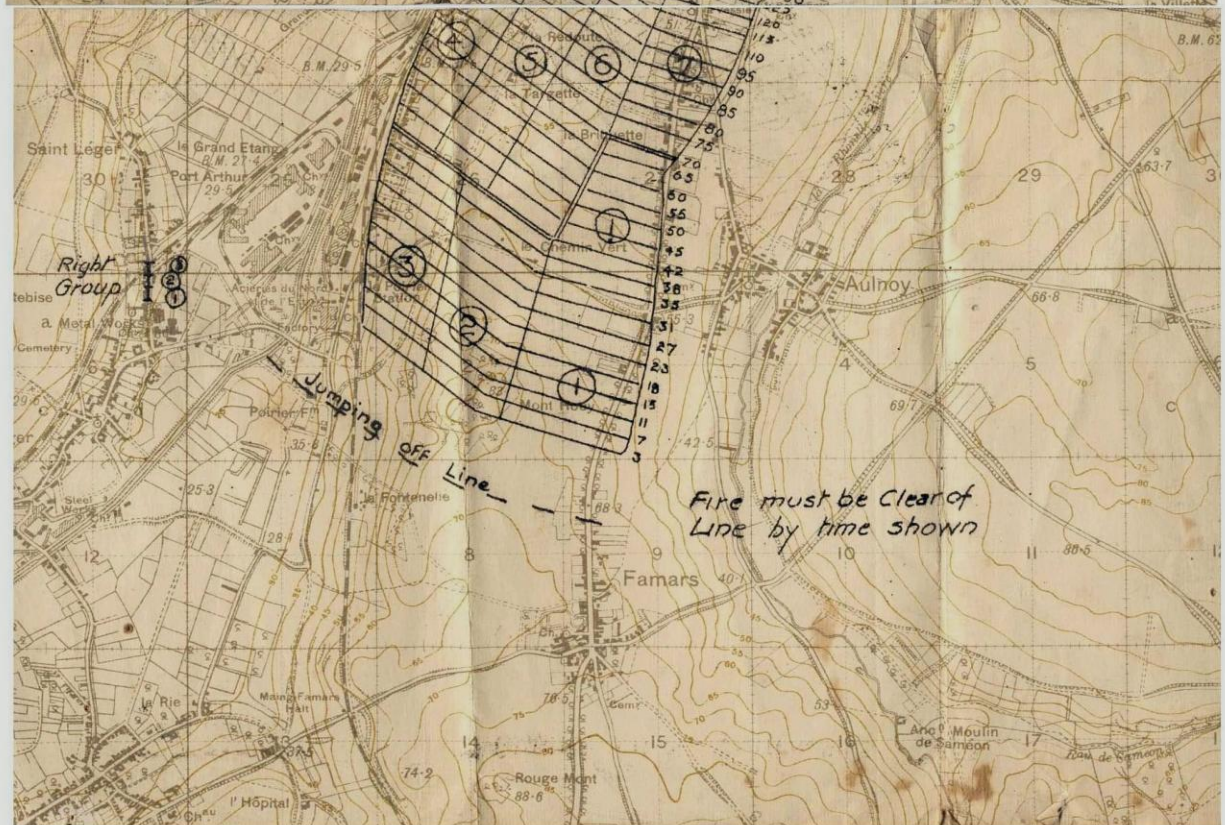
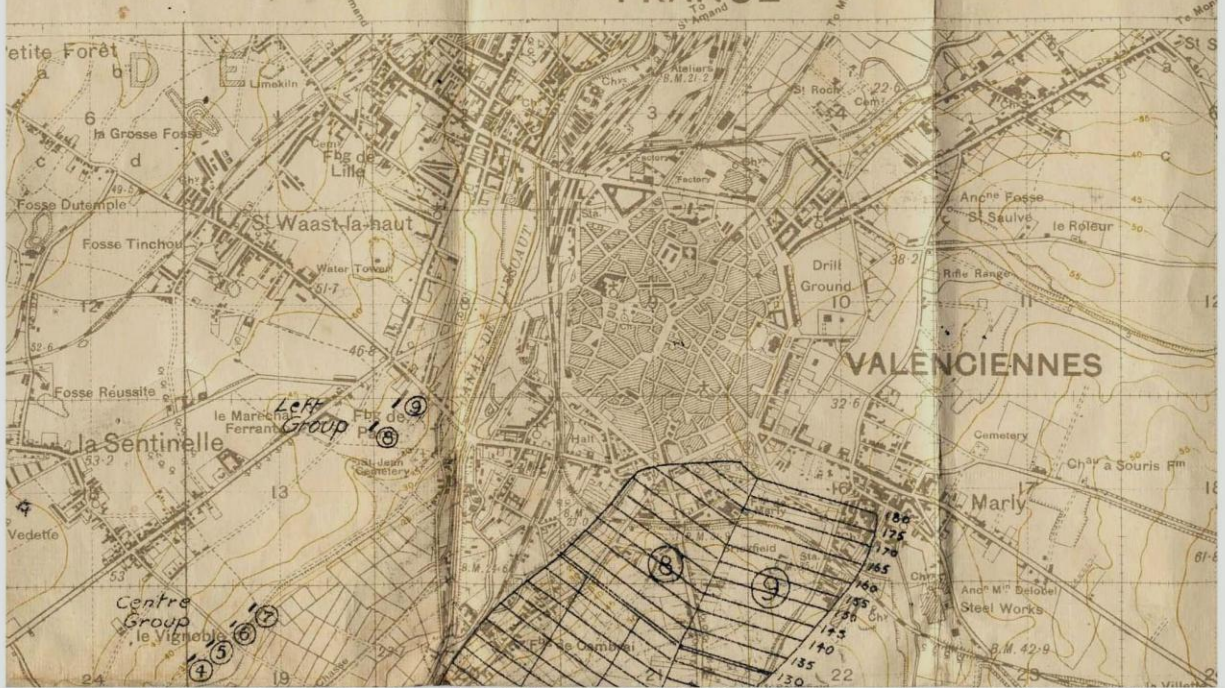
The Germans were overwhelmed and the Canadian Infantry took Mont Houy and Valenciennes very quickly. The roads became impassable for the Germans, they were now littered with destroyed German vehicles, dead Germans and horses impeding their ability to bring up fresh men and supplies to fight off the Canadian attack.

The Canadians were in no mood to take too many prisoners after seeing what despicable hardships the Germans had inflicted on the poor French civilians. Although they did take 1800 German prisoners this day, the Germans suffered over 800 killed compared to only 80 Canadians killed and 421 Canadians wounded.

This “*Machine Gun Barrage Map*” shows how the Batteries in various positions would gradually advance their fire, moving forward 100 yards every few minutes.

Secret

MACHINE GUN BARRAGE MAP  
FRANCE



After the barrage concluded, the “1<sup>st</sup> Motors” moved to Maing about noon, upon arrival “C and “E” Batteries again under the command of Captain Worthington were instructed to go forward with the 44<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion and set up their guns on the eastern slope of Mont Houy where they stayed for the night and following morning before returning to Maing. On the afternoon of the 3<sup>rd</sup> “C” and “E” Batteries were ordered to follow the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion’s advance at 5PM.

That night Nov.3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> “C” Battery was placed in defensive positions astride the Mons-Valenciennes Road to protect the 38<sup>th</sup> and 72<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalions who had scouting patrols out in front of them. The enemy fortunately did not attack this night but their artillery fire was heavy all night.

By now rumours of an Armistice would be circulating up and down the Western Front, unsettling times for the men now not wanting to be killed in the last few days of the war. But the enemy, although realizing they would lose the war did not let up in fighting a brutal retreat.

On Nov.5<sup>th</sup> “C” Battery again in conjunction with “E” Battery were moving on foot in the early morning foggy



mist through a cabbage patch when they came upon a German machine gun crew about 25 yards away which immediately opened fire at them. At such close range the Batteries returned fire using their pistols while quickly setting up their machine guns. At this time the Commander of "C" Battery Lieut. W.A. Montgomery was killed, the German gunner was also killed and the rest of the German gun crew wisely surrendered.

The next day Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> "C" Battery would lay down a barrage to cover the successful advance of the 85<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion. In the short space of Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> to Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.M.G.B. suffered 3 men killed and 83 wounded. Surprisingly Harold's service record lists him as never being wounded, a very lucky man indeed under such dangerous circumstances.

Artillery shells, poison gas and bullets weren't the only killers on the Western Front in 1918/19, the Spanish Flu Epidemic would kill millions worldwide. The "*1<sup>st</sup> Motors*" alone in November would send 87 men to the hospital with this disease, but luckily not Harold.

When the war ended at 11AM on November 11<sup>th</sup> the Brigade was approaching Mons Belgium where they

proudly paraded through the town to the cheers of the local townspeople. The Canadians were hailed as heroes, not just by the townspeople of Mons, but also by the British, Mons is where the British Army was first defeated and driven out in the first days of the war in 1914. The war started and finished in Mons Belgium for the British Empire thanks to the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

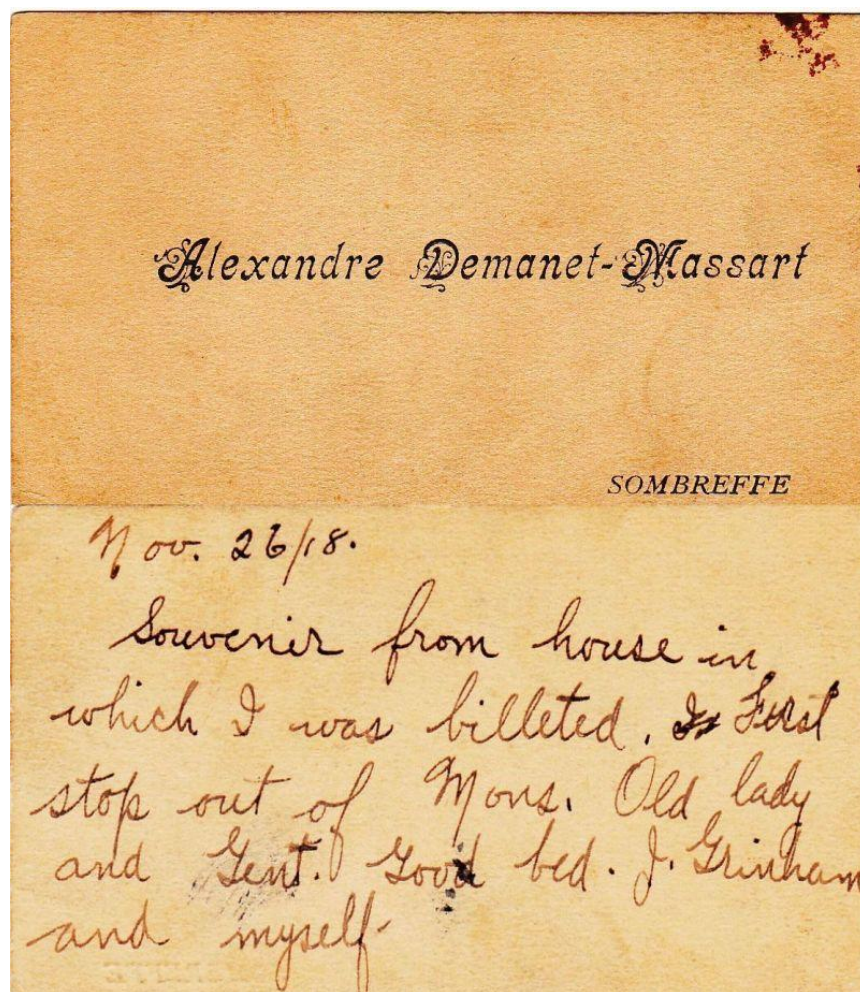
The Motors parading in Mons Belgium on Nov.15<sup>th</sup>.



But this was not the end of duty for the Motor Machine Gunners yet, the Canadian Corps was tasked with pushing the defeated German Army back into Germany

and in the process preventing pillaging and protecting all the bridgeheads from being blown.

As they crossed Belgium towards Germany Harold saved a few souvenirs from the various places they were billeted in. It would now be a luxury for the men to sleep in a real bed with a roof over their head for a change.



James Grinham #799449 billeted with Harold in Sombrefe Belgium, their first stop out of Mons.





The Best Luck Wishes (in German)



## German Mauser- Gewehr Rifle Bullet Clip (less bullets)

One of Harold's souvenirs.



On Dec.13<sup>th</sup> the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division crossed the Rhine at Cologne and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division crossed the Rhine at Bonn while being saluted by all the Generals in a huge ceremonial parade with flags flying and Brass and Pipe Bands playing "*The Maple Leaf Forever*", General Sir Arthur Currie upon seeing one of the Machine Gun

Battalions marching past grabbed General Brutinel by the arm and said.....

*“Bruty I knew you were doing something big, but I never realized until today that you had given us such an irresistible force. There is nothing so powerful and impressive anywhere. I thank you for it Bruty”.*

All the while General Brutinel’s favourite machine gunners the “*Motors*” were conspicuously absent. They had been tasked to go ahead to deal with violent bands of Bolsheviks who were pillaging and terrorizing the German countryside. Their known presents and fierce reputation would bring peace without any action required.

In a few days they would temporarily billet in comfort at Annaberg Castle, Friesdorf Germany just outside of Bonn. Although the war was over vigilance was still foremost in the men’s minds as many of the German soldiers were bitter from losing the war. As well, fraternizing with the civilian population was frowned upon by the General Staff.

Christmas Day 1918 in Friesdorf Germany General Brutinel would arrive to inspect his favourite troops, and preside over Christmas Dinner. Life was finally good for the brave men who risked life and limb every day and lived to tell the tale.

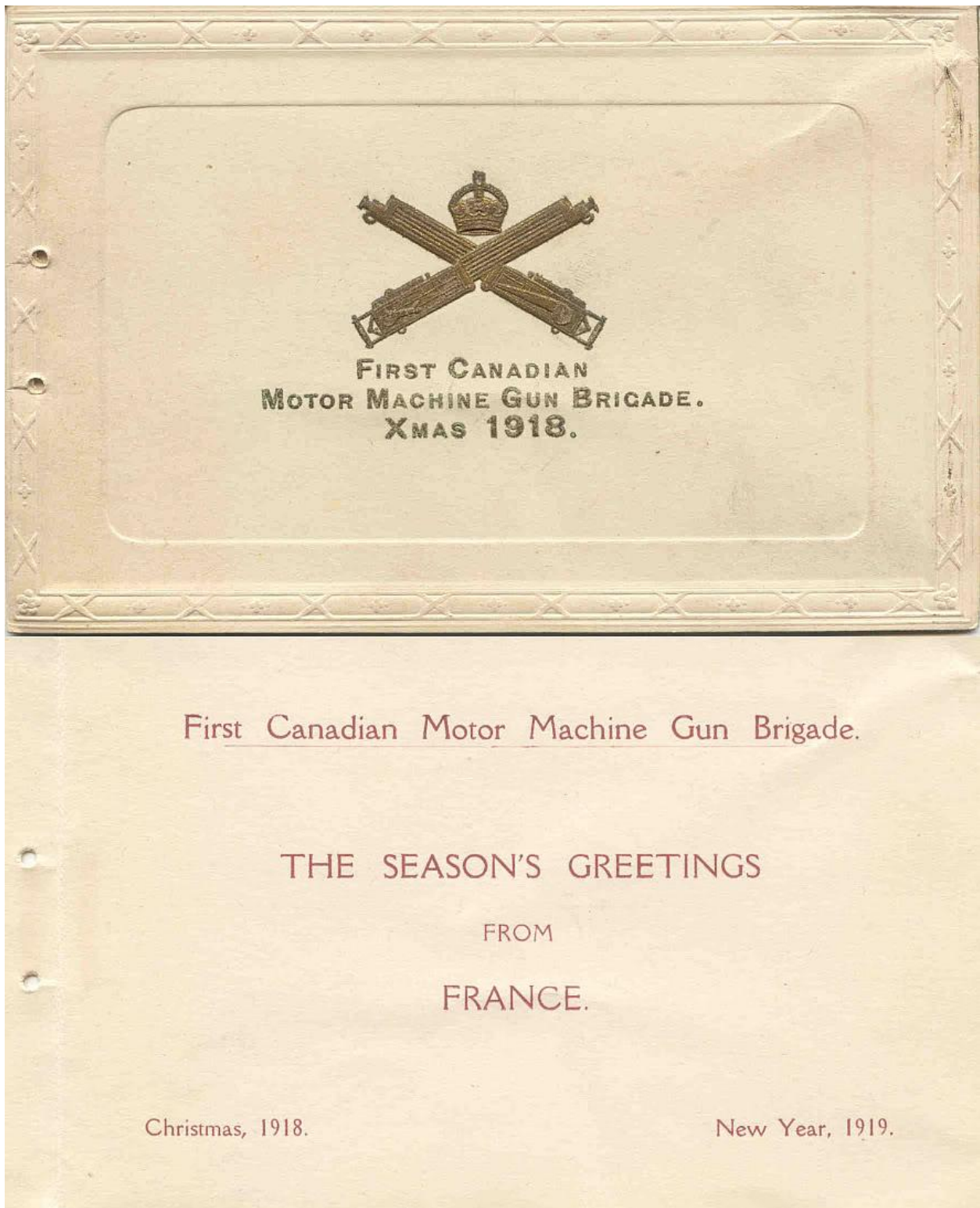
Harold's seating place card for Christmas dinner.

Pte. Fowler "C" Bty





1<sup>st</sup> Motors Christmas Card.





December 31<sup>st</sup> would see them posing for Brigade and Battery photos in front of Annaberg Castle, Friesdorf Germany. This castle still stands today as a First Class Hotel.



## “C “Battery the “Bordens”

Annaberg Castle Dec.31<sup>st</sup> 1918.

Harold is in back row 4<sup>th</sup> from the right still wearing his  
.455 pistol.



Inset of “C” Battery photo.



The Brigade along with M.M.G. Mechanical Transport Coy. and the Machine Gun Corps Band on Dec.31<sup>st</sup> 1918 at Annaberg Castle Friesdorf.



During this Occupation Period the “*Motors*” being a Mobile Unit and top notch soldiers they were given the prestigious but very important duty of being the armed escort for the Commander of the Canadian Corps General Sir Arthur Currie, as well as supplying protection for the full Canadian Corps Headquarters Staff, quite a feather in the cap for a young man from the little farm town of Watford Ont.





Harold is standing in front of their Armoured Car 2<sup>nd</sup> from the right next to James Grinham on the right on the streets of Bonn Germany. Personal photos were not allowed in the field during the war, but this being the *"Occupation Period"* the men had these two photos taken to show family of their proud duty and good fortune.



Of the 8 original Armoured Cars only 4 survived the war, 2 from each Brigade. The only existing car today is a 1<sup>st</sup> Motors Car which is on display at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, this was confirmed by F.F. Worthington the “E” Battery Commander during the war, so there is a 50/50 chance this is the same Car that is in the two photos that Harold is standing in front of.



In March 1919 the Brigade would return to England to prepare to be shipped home and Honourably Discharged, but first a Brigade Colours was made and to be presented to the Brigade in the city of Carlisle England.





The Brigades mascot proudly sits at Attention during the presentation ceremony.



The city of Carlisle bestowed this honour to the Brigade because the Brigades Commanding Officer Lt.-Col. W.K. Walker was born here. It was a proud day for the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, the whole town of Carlisle came out to watch the ceremony and to cheer the gallant surviving Canadian Motor Machine Gunners.

They would proudly parade the flag again upon arriving in Seaford England just before sailing home to Canada.



Awaiting the arrival of their flag, Harold is 10<sup>th</sup> man down the line on March 30<sup>th</sup> 1919.

Artists rendition of the 1<sup>st</sup> Motors Colours.



It would be placed in the Christ Church Cathedral in Ottawa on May 4<sup>th</sup> upon returning to Canada but it now resides at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.



On April 2<sup>nd</sup> some men, all members of “C” Battery the “Bordens” posed for a post card with the Brigade mascot.

Harold is in the back row 3<sup>rd</sup> from the left.





From Seaford they would take a train to Liverpool to sail home to Canada on April 12<sup>th</sup> 1919 aboard the White Star Line's R.M.S. Adriatic.



Harold's berth and meal card on the Adriatic.

<p>S. S. ADRIATIC</p> <p><b>KEEP THIS CARD</b>      No. <u>124</u></p> <p>You will occupy ONE BERTH</p> <p><b>SECTION N ROOM</b></p> <p>You will Mess at Table No. <u>53</u> in  <b>DINING ROOM</b>      <i>Capt 2nd</i>      <b>Sitting</b></p> <p><small>NOTE:- This card must be punched when a meal is served  and no meal will be served without it.</small></p>	<p>You are assigned to { <b>BOAT</b> _____  <b>RAFT</b> _____ }</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GENERAL SAFETY ORDERS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never open any air port or opening in the Ship's side.</li> <li>2. Do not tamper with any machinery, apparatus or Electric Lamps.</li> <li>3. Smoking permitted on upper decks.</li> <li>4. No smoking below decks at any time.</li> </ol>
---	--

They would arrive in Halifax on Easter Sunday April 20<sup>th</sup> and then in Montreal on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. From there the men

would collect their discharge certificates and say their goodbye's to each other before getting on trains to scatter across Canada to home and proud waiting family. Harold's Discharge Certificate is dated April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1919. After 1150 days of military service Harold was once again a civilian. (He was only 20 years old, not 21 as shown.)

CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE	
DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE	War Service Badge Class "A" No. ....
THIS IS TO CERTIFY that No. <u>844424</u> (Rank) <u>Private</u> .	
Name (in full) <u>Fowler, Harold, Eaton</u>	enlisted in
he <u>149th Battalion</u>	
CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE at <u>Watford, Ont.</u> on the <u>28th</u>	
day of <u>February</u>	19 <u>16</u> IN FRANCE
HE served in <u>149th Battalion</u>	
and is now discharged from the service by reason of <u>Demobilization.</u> <u>Medical Unfitness.</u>	
THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS SOLDIER on the DATE below is as follows:	
Age <u>21</u>	Marks or Scars
Height <u>5' 9"</u>	<u>Scar right thigh 1914</u>
Complexion <u>Fair</u>	
Eyes <u>Grey</u>	
Hair <u>Light Brown</u>	
<u>H.E. Fowler</u> Signature of Soldier	<u>H. Fisher</u> Issuing Officer
Date of Discharge	Rank
<u>APR 22 1919</u>	<u>Private</u>
	Date <u>April 22</u> 19 <u>19</u>
N.B.—As no duplicate of this Certificate will be issued, any person finding same is requested to forward it in an unstamped envelope to the Secretary, Militia Council, Ottawa, Canada.	
M.F.B. 39. 1043-D.F.-369M-11-13. H.Q. 1772-38-882.	



Returning home soldiers were given this pamphlet.



## WELCOME HOME

The Red Triangle stood by you in action. It is prepared to stand by you in the re-action.

Red Triangle Clubs have been organized at a number of strategic centres in Canada.

These clubs will as far as possible take the place of home until you are permanently located.

Comfortable, clean sleeping accommodation and good, wholesome food are provided at exceedingly moderate rates.

The social and recreational features that you have learned to associate with the "Red Triangle" overseas will be in full evidence at each Club.

You are cordially invited to make full use of the Club wherever found. The doors are open night and day.

RED TRIANGLE CLUBS may be found at the under-noted places:—

Halifax.....	100 beds.
St. John, N.B.	
Quebec, St. John Street.	
Montreal, Dominion Square.....	150 "
Toronto, Victoria Street.....	270 "
Winnipeg, Main Street.....	150 "
Regina.....	40 "
Vancouver, opposite C.P.R. station.	200 "

Arrangements are being made to establish Red Triangle Clubs at Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary and elsewhere. Dormitory accommodation may be had at most Y.M.C.A.'s.

### EMPLOYMENT.

The Clubs place their resources at your disposal to help you secure congenial and remunerative employment.

### ADJUSTMENT.

Advise as to problems of pay, pensions and allowances. Don't worry guessing. Consult the Red Triangle Club Service Bureau.

### FREE MEMBERSHIP IN Y.M.C.A.'s.

Any local Y.M.C.A. in Canada will present free to any returned soldier applying for same a Six Months' Membership Ticket.

EXTRACT FROM ORDER-IN-COUNCIL DECEMBER 21st, 1918, BY CABINET COUNCIL AUTHORIZING THE PAYMENT OF A WAR SERVICE GRATUITY TO BE PAYABLE TO THE NAVAL AND LAND FORCES OF CANADA IN PLACE OF POST DISCHARGE PAY.

1.
  - (a) In the Canadian Naval Service for three years, six months of which service were in a sea-going vessel..... 183 days.
  - (b) In the Canadian Naval Service for two years and under three years, six months of which service were in a sea-going vessel. 153 days.
  - (c) In the Canadian Naval Service for one year and under two years, six months of which service were in a sea-going vessel..... 122 days.
  - (d) In the Canadian Naval Service for less than one year, six months of which service were in a sea-going vessel..... 92 days.
2.
  - (a) In the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (Overseas Division) in a ship of the Royal Navy for three years..... 183 days.
  - (b) In the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (Overseas Division) in a ship of the Royal Navy for two years and under three years..... 153 days.
  - (c) In the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (Overseas Division) in a ship of the Royal Navy for one year and under two years..... 122 days.
  - (d) In the Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (Overseas Division) in a ship of the Royal Navy for less than one year... 92 days.
3.
  - (a) In the Canadian Expeditionary Force for three years, any part of which service was overseas..... 183 days.
  - (b) In the Canadian Expeditionary Force for two years and under three years, any part of which service was overseas..... 153 days.
  - (c) In the Canadian Expeditionary Force for one year and under two years, any part of which service was overseas..... 122 days.
  - (d) In the Canadian Expeditionary Force for less than one year, any part of which service was overseas..... 92 days.
4. In any Canadian Naval or Land Force for three years or over..... 92 days.
5. In any Canadian Naval or Land Force for two years and under three years..... 61 days.
6. In any Canadian Naval or Land Force for one year and under two years..... 31 days.

(The above is retroactive for the men who have seen actual fighting service and who were discharged prior to November 11th, 1918.)



The town of Watford would gratefully welcome home it's surviving native sons when they returned from the war.



Over 600,000 Canadians out of a population of only 8 million would go to war between 1914 and 1918, 1 of 10 would not return. The Canadian Corps consisting of only 4 Divisions of Infantry plus Artillery and the Machine Gun Corps in the “Last 100 Days” of the war defeated 47 German Divisions about ¼ of the German Army.

### Lest We Forget



It would take the Canadian Government some time to make and send out all the medals to the men who served in *"The Great War"*, but they would eventually arrive.

The medal on the left is the British War Medal, and the right one is the Victory Medal. On the rim of each medal is inscribed his service number, name, and the Unit he first went to France with, which was the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion.



A Canadian Machine Gun Corps Lapel Pin was given to each member of the Corps. who's motto was.....

“Straight and True”



The War Service Pin Class “A” was given to all Canadians who served at the Front in the First World War.





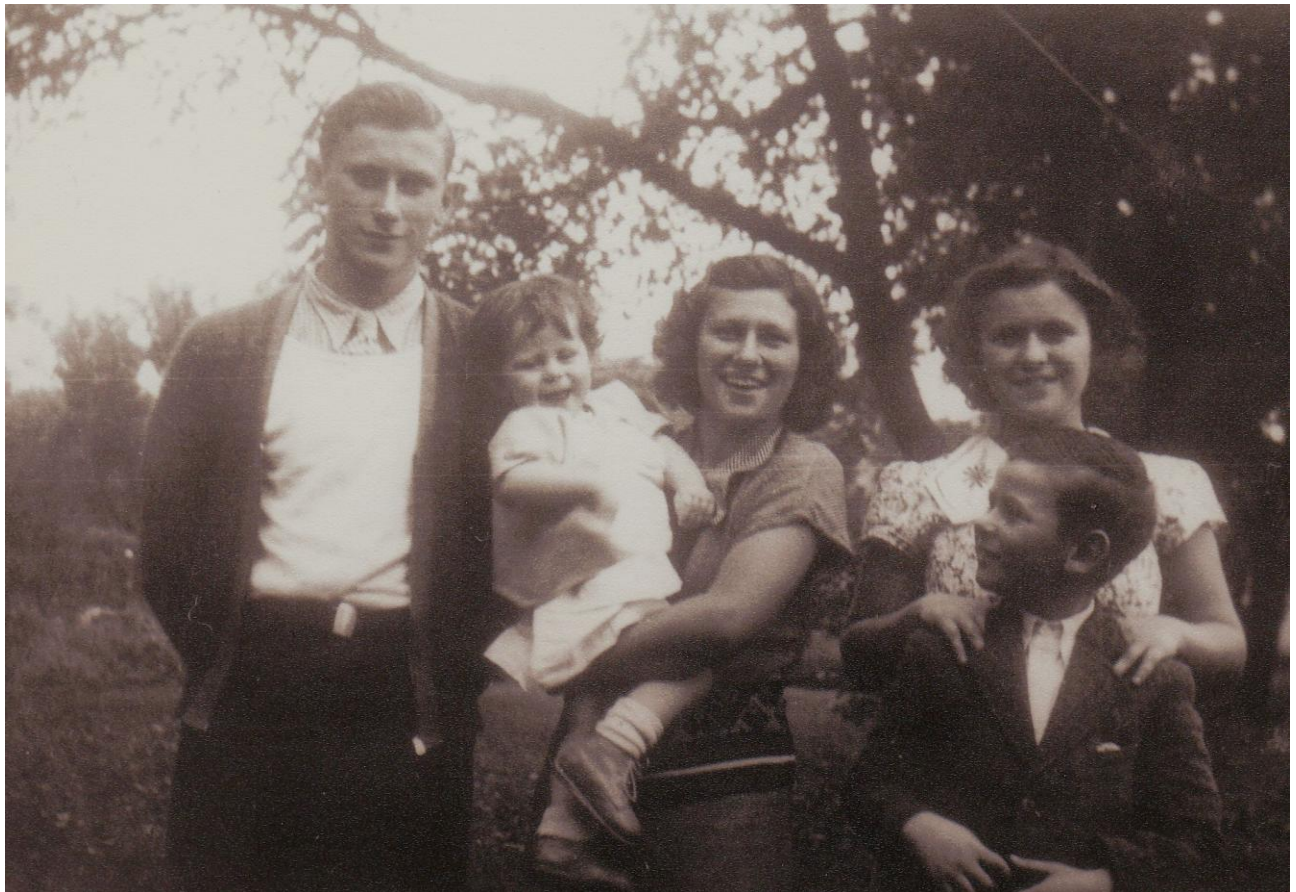
## Epilogue

Now Harold could put the War behind him as did thousands of other Canadian Veterans. Harold and Rosetta would soon marry and move to Sarnia and raise a family of five, Marion, Virginia, Harold Eston Jr., Clarence, and Rosemarie.



He would work at the Imperial Oil Refinery while living at 525 Confederation St. and 716 Ross Ave. in Sarnia. I have great memories from both of these houses.

Left to right Harold Jr. , Rosemarie , Marion , Virginia ,  
with Clarence in front.



Over the last 5 months I have exhausted every known resource I could find on Harold's War experience, but I will never stop looking for more information.

### **Les Fowler, Proud Grandson**



